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04/03/2014 Minutes

Arlington Master Plan Advisory Committee

Central School, Main Room - 7:30 PM

Minutes: April 3, 2014

Approved: April 10, 2014

Members present: Ann LeRoyer, Charles Kalauskas, Greg Bowe, Sheri Baron, Bob Radochia, Pam Heidell

Members absent: Eric Bourassa, Joe Barr, Harris Band, Carol Svenson

Also present: Consultant Judi Barrett of RKG; Christine Scypinski (ARB) and Joe Curro (BoS); Carol Kowalski, Laura Wiener, Ted Fields, and Joey Glushko of the Planning Dept. Sign-in sheets at the public presentation indicated that about fifteen residents were in attendance.

The meeting was called to order at 7:40 PM. Charlie Kalauskas greeted attendees, and recognized Committee members present, as well as audience members of Town government and other committees.

Judi Barrett gave a PowerPoint supported presentation on the Economic Development working paper, followed by a discussion of selected questions (The working paper and questions are available on-line:

http://www.arlingtonma.gov/Public_Documents/ArlingtonMA_PLanning/masterplan/workingpapers/index ; see following questions.). Following are the questions, some abbreviated, accompanied by some of the public comments for each question:

1) Should zoning attempt to address (real or perceived) parking shortages in business districts accessible to public transportation?

Parking is available and present; when it is not available, people should walk;

Zoning should clearly reflect what is desired by the Town, and possible;

While locals may not need parking right at their destination, visitors/tourists to our community may need parking closer to their destinations; they are important for local businesses; wayfinding signage would be a helpful addition;

In Arlington Center, when there are numerous functions scheduled at same time, parking does become an issue; consider altered parking/traffic flow when there are multiple events; consider “peak” and “average” load;

Address the poor functioning of our parking payment system.

2) Will residents support mixed-use projects by these or other means: greater building height allowances (under six stories), lower parking requirements, or simpler (expedited) permitting processes for mixed-use redevelopment?

Allow higher building height where appropriate, and in context of nearby structures;

Create design guidelines which control context of new and redevelopment;

Streetscape is important;

Will the market in Arlington support these mixed use districts? Must find the right developer(s);

Change zoning to reflect what is desired in “mixed use” development areas.

3) If the Town identified areas considered most important for promoting commercial or mixed-use redevelopment – what would those sites be? Here are some examples; suggest other possible sites and tell us why you have selected them:

• East Broadway (Warren Street to Cambridge line) – expect future Green Line Extension;

• Massachusetts Avenue, from Lafayette Street to Boulevard Road (next to Route 16 and Cambridge line) – “gateway” area to Arlington;

• Massachusetts Avenue, between Forest Street and Hobbs Court (along Mill Brook) – historic corridor between Bikeway and Mass. Ave.;

• Lowell Street, between Park Avenue and Mill Lane – extend to Forest St. – recognize diverse uses in a

neighborhood with empty storefronts and unused buildings;

- Dow Avenue, next to Route 2 – proximity to highway and residential neighborhood.

4) Arlington has a fairly large percentage of residents who self-report as working at home at some point during the work week. What economic development opportunities and needs exist – if any – to capitalize on the presence of so many home-based workers?

Important to distinguish between those who are self-employed and those who are telecommuters;
Guidelines needed for developing “incubator space.”

5) Should the Town adopt parking and other policies to support anchor uses that benefit commercial districts as a whole?

Need to define “anchor uses”; i.e., Cyrus Dallin Museum is an example of such a use;

Adapt policies for local neighborhoods for parking, hours of operation of the “anchor use”, determine a mix of businesses which can support each other in a district.

Following the presentation and discussion, the Master Plan Advisory Committee addressed the remaining business items on its agenda. The following topics were tabled to April 10: Review/Approval of Minutes, Status report for appointment of new member, Comments/Discussion of MPAC review of Public Facilities Working Paper, and the Draft Schedule for the remainder of the year.

The Selection of the new vice-chair was accomplished. Bob Radochia made a motion to nominate Carol Svenson as the new vice-chair; this was seconded by Pam Heidell and unanimously approved by the members present.

Carol Kowalski announced that the MPAC would report to Town Meeting on May 7; details of this presentation would be developed in the coming weeks.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 PM.

Minutes submitted by Joey Glushko